

## Claims

1. A method for providing a search result list, the method comprising:  
receiving a search request from a searcher;  
in a database of search listings, each search listing being associated with an advertiser and including at least one search term and a bid amount modifiably bid by the advertiser, identifying search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;  
selecting according to bid amount no more than a predetermined number of identified search listings for display to the searcher;  
arranging the identified search listings for display in a random order as the search result list; and  
communicating the search result list to the searcher.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
changing the random order upon subsequent receipt of the search request.
3. The method of claim 2 further comprising:  
changing the random order periodically.
4. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
detecting a change in content of the identified search listings for display; and  
in response, changing the random order.
5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
detecting an increased bid amount of a search listing among the identified search listings for display; and  
in response, changing the random order.
6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
applying an algorithm to the probability of displaying a respective search listing of the identified search listings in a particular

location in the search result list to reduce the randomness of the ordering of the search result list.

- 5           7.     A method for providing a search result list, the method comprising:
- receiving a search request from a searcher;
- in a database of search listings, each search listing being associated with an advertiser and including at least one search term and a bid amount modifiably bid by the advertiser, identifying search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;
- 10           selecting according to bid amount no more than a predetermined number of identified search listings for display to the searcher;
- arranging as the search result list the identified search listings for display in a random order weighted according to the bid amount associated with each respective identified search listing; and
- communicating the search result list to the searcher.
- 15           8.     The method of claim 7 further comprising:
- selecting a first respective search listing for a first-displayed location in the search result list according to a bid amount-weighted random drawing, leaving remaining search listings; and
- 20           repetitively selecting a next respective search listing for a next-displayed location in the search result list according to a bid amount-weighted random drawing among the remaining search listings until the search result list is fully populated.
- 25           9.     The method of claim 7, wherein the identified search listings are arranged in the search result list in a random order weighed by bid amount associated with each respective identified search listing, the influence of bid amount being controlled by one or more predetermined parameters.
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10. A method for providing a search result list, the method comprising:

receiving a search request from a searcher;

in a database of search listings, each search listing being associated with an advertiser and including at least one search term and a bid amount modifiably bid by the advertiser, identifying search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

selecting according to bid amount no more than a predetermined number of identified search listings for display to the searcher;

arranging as the search result list the identified search listings for display in a random order weighted according to the bid rank associated with each respective identified search listing; and communicating the search result list to the searcher.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising:

selecting a first respective search listing for a first-displayed location in the search result list according to a bid rank-weighted random drawing, leaving remaining search listings; and repetitively selecting a next respective search listing for a next-displayed location in the search result list according to a bid rank-weighted random drawing among the remaining search listings until the search result list is fully populated.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the identified search listings are arranged in the search result list in a random order weighed by bid rank associated with each respective identified search listing, the influence of bid rank being controlled by one or more predetermined parameters.

13. A method for providing a search result list, the method comprising:

receiving a search request from a searcher;

in a database of search listings, each search listing being associated with an advertiser and including at least one search term and

a bid amount modifiably bid by the advertiser, identifying search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

selecting according to bid amount a variable number of identified search listings for display to the searcher, the number of selected identified search listings being a function of the bid amounts for the identified search listings;

arranging the identified search listings for display as the search result list; and

communicating the search result list to the searcher.

14. A method for operating a search system, the method comprising:

storing a plurality of search listing records, each search listing record including

data defining a search term,

data defining a bid amount chargeable to an advertiser upon receipt of a click through selecting the search listing among displayed search results;

receiving from the advertiser a new desired rank for a search listing;

determining a new bid amount for the search listing required to achieve the new desired rank for the search listing; and

updating the stored search listing with the new bid amount.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein determining the new bid amount comprises:

locating a search listing for the search term having a rank no greater than the new desired rank;

retrieving bid amount associated with the located search listing; and

determining a bid N cents higher than the retrieved bid amount.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein  $N = 1$ .

17. The method of claim 15 further comprising:

receiving a confirmation from the advertiser; and

updating the data defining the bid amounts for the plurality of search listing records.